—Intensification of environment management to be made by the Mathura Refinery.

—Natural gas to be made available for industries.

—Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) to be made available for vehicles.

—Clean fuel to be arranged for Mathura Refinery.

—Hydrocracking technology to be set up for the Mathura Refinery.

—Identification of alternative strategies for environmental management in consultation with Asian Development Bank.

Shifting of Taj Mahal

5444. SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to certain reports proposing shifting of the Taj from Agra to a safer site;

(b) whether such a move has been suggested by the experts of the Ministry to save the Taj from environmental pollution;

(c) whether Government have taken any decision on these suggestions;

(d) if so, the details thereof, with estimated expenditure involved in it; and

(e) if not, the action proposed to be taken against those responsible for pub lication of such reports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRl KAMAL NATH); (a) Yes, Sir, next item. "Taj to be shifted" was published on 1st April, 1995 in the Hindustan Times.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

(e) This matter has been brought to the attention of the concerned authorities for appropriate action.

Extinction of rhinoceros

5445. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there are lets than 2,000 onehonned rhinoceroses left in India at present and their numr ber is dwindling rapidly;

(b) whether the threat of extrinction of rhinoceroses is due to increased poaching, combined with habital destruction;

(c) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) what steps, if any have been taken by Government to curb this twin menace to the rhinoceros and other endangered species?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF 1HE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The population of rhinoceros in the country is estimated at 1495. It is not true that their number is dwindling repidly.

(b) Although the rhinoceros is an endangered species it is not threatened with extinction as there are several populations distributed in 3 States and there has been Significant decline in poaching cases in recent years. There are also no reports of habitat destruction as the rhino habitat is protected in the form of national parks and sanctuaries.

(d) The steps taken by the Government for protecting Rhinoceros and other endangered species are given below:

(i) A network of 6 wildlife sanctuaries and 3 national parks has been set up for conservation of the species and its habitat. Financial assistance is provided by the Central Government for development of national parks and sanctuaries, on request from the State Governments. A special scheme of Conservation of Rhinos in Assam has now been transferred to the State Go-